

A ROMANCE OF THE BIG HORN.

BY HOWARD SEELY, AUTHOR OF "A NYMPH OF THE WEST," "A TEXAN BOPEEP," "FRONTIER TALES," ETC.

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V.



RACE BREVOORT woke in an agony of excitement and terror: the earth was shaking with a strong vibratory tremor, and she could feel the small adobe house thrill and quiver with the rush of some mighty object without, that went shrieking through the darkness and dying away down the wind. In the sudden recall to consciousness, Miss Brevoort could not, at first, remember her surroundings; and it was only when she heard a long wailing whistle, down the valley, that she realized it must have been the passage of a night-express that had caused her sudden alarm. Evidently, then, the ranch was near the railroad, and she had an additional opportunity of return. She was so overjoyed by this reflection, that she turned again upon her pillow and was soon asleep.

It was early dawn when Grace opened her eyes; the first lances of the sun were piercing the small window of the ranch and shattering themselves upon the rough wall above her head. Fearful of being surprised in her recumbent attitude, she arose and made a hasty toilet with the scant utensils the ranch afforded. Then, passing into the kitchen, she inspected the larder narrowly, to see what were the prospects for breakfast. She was rewarded by the discovery of some eggs, a side of bacon, and some canned goods in a small cupboard. She busied herself in building a fire in the stove, boiling some coffee, and cooking breakfast. This she ate in solitary loneliness, attended only by the black cat, which purred loudly like some mad thing and sat on a bench by her side during the progress of the meal. After breakfast, from a sense of neatness she could not explain, the young girl washed

the dishes and bestirred herself in tidying up the room. It must have been ten o'clock when, in some alarm at the solitariness of the place, she put on her hat and went outside to reconnoitre.

No one was in sight, and, after watering her horse at a small pool near the ranch, Grace tethered him anew and returned to the house. Her situation now began to give her the gravest uneasiness. She pictured to herself the alarm of Tom and Edith upon their return and the unexplained mystery of her absence. What would they think and what would they do? How long would it be before the owner of the ranch would return? And ought she not, under the circumstances, to saddle her horse and make a second attempt to find her way back? She was pondering all this in her mind with increasing perplexity, when a sudden noise at the door startled her. She sprang to her feet—a horseman had ridden up to the very doorway of the ranch and was about to dismount. Miss Brevoort recognized at a glance the gray horse that had figured in the incidents of the day before, and the trappings and habiliments of his rider. The horseman had a strong well-developed figure. The lower part of his face was hidden by a light-colored beard, and his cheeks were tanned to the very eyelids with exposure; but something in his expression made Grace fix upon him an eager and steadfast gaze. She gasped for breath. She was surely dreaming. It could not be—yes, it was: it was unmistakably Jack Harrison.

The sudden surprise of this meeting was so overpowering, that, for a few seconds, Grace was deprived of power to move or speak; she stood rooted to the floor, just as she had arisen, the rich blood crimsoning her face and neck, one long blonde tress escaping from its confinement and falling

upon her shoulder. The horseman, already apprised that he had a visitor, from the presence of the strange horse outside, came leisurely toward the ranch-house and in at the open door without removing his hat. When he perceived that it was a lady, he suddenly doffed this, disclosing a frank manly face and a pair of critical eyes that were widely distended, in the completeness of his astonishment.

"Miss Brevoort!" he gasped. "How came you here?"

The hat dropped from his hand, in his embarrassment.

The sound of his voice, richer and stronger than of old, thrilled through Grace with all the memories of the past; but his manner of address brought with it a strange chill. He had called her "Miss Brevoort." In the brief interval since she had first recognized him, it had flashed through her mind that their greeting, after so long a period and under such remarkable circumstances, would be as familiar as of old, and, accompanying her bewilderment, there had been a spasm of joy. She felt instinctively her mistake.

"I was out riding," she faltered, "and I lost my way. I am stopping with my brother, at the Big Horn Ranch."

"In Texas? Lost?" Harrison repeated, absently. He gazed about him vacantly, like one in a dream. "You have been here long?"

"Ever since last night," Grace returned.

"Impossible!" he exclaimed.

His eye wandered a moment over the little room and the poverty of its furnishings. Then his old pride asserted itself.

"I trust you were partially comfortable," he said. "This frontier life of ours is a hard one. The country is, just at present, full of road-agents and train-wreckers, and, living so near the line of the railroad, I have given little attention to the place. I did not return, last night, as I was detained by an imperative matter. I regret that I had so little to offer you."

"I have been very comfortable, I am sure," Grace rejoined, quietly. She had, in a measure, recovered her composure. "If now you can assist me to return to my people, there will be little to be desired."

"I will do so with pleasure, Miss Brevoort," Harrison returned, with grave courtesy. "I am annoyed at the thought of your having

been exposed to such danger. Are you aware, pray, of the condition of the country? How did you dare to risk so much?"

"It was quite an accident," Grace replied, carelessly. "I have my own folly to thank for it, I suppose. You see," she added, smiling, "I had been here so long, that I felt like a native and presumed upon it. But, judging from what I witnessed yesterday from the verandah, I am fortunate in having so skillful a protector."

Jack Harrison colored a trifle under the admiring glance of her amber eyes.

"I have fallen quite in with the ways of the country, and count myself quite a frontiersman," he replied, modestly. "But I was very fortunate yesterday. That fellow was the most notorious road-agent and train-wrecker in the country, and had given the authorities no end of trouble—myself included. However," he added, "I fear that the capture all went for nothing, for I learned last night that he had made his escape. It was that which detained me."

"Is it possible?" Grace exclaimed, involuntarily.

"It certainly is," her companion rejoined, "and it is that which makes me anxious for your own welfare. Granted that you were lucky enough yesterday to escape without attack, you might not be so fortunate again. Do you not think, now that you are here, it would be better to return as far as Ballinger by rail? We can hire a conveyance from that station to the Big Horn."

"That," replied Miss Brevoort, "is, of course, as you decide." She smiled graciously upon him. "I am in your hands—Jack." She could not bring herself to the formality of calling him Mr. Harrison.

They were standing at the door of the kitchen when she surprised him with this reference to old times. The color mounted to Harrison's face in an instant. He had stooped and picked up the water-pail, as if about to start for the spring. His embarrassment was so great that he stumbled.

"I must leave you for a moment," he said, hurriedly. "You must be hungry, after such primitive hospitality. I trust you can entertain yourself while I see about dinner."

With a half-bow, he passed out into the sunlight and disappeared around an angle of the house.

VI.

LEFT to herself, the past, with all the irony of its associations and memories, came thronging upon Grace, and she sank into a chair with a plaintive little sigh. This man who had just left her was Jack Harrison—Jack Harrison! Could she realize it? She told herself the fact over and over again, putting both hands to her temples and staring before her in a confused way. How the ghost of their past love mocked her in this formal exchange of greetings and common-places! And what an eternity it seemed since they had dreamed that old dream over together. Ah! they had been so happy! And now she had lost him—she had lost him, to find him cold, impassive, apologetic, with no trace of his old feeling but his embarrassment, and, she half thought, a possible regret at the meeting. Oh! it was cruel—cruel!

A sudden report of fire-arms drowned these reflections and drove the blood in ice-currents to her heart. What had happened? She sprang to her feet and rushed to the door wildly. She could see nothing. The landscape without lay calm and unruffled beneath a summer's sun; a prairie-dog barked shrilly from his burrow; the fleeting shadow of a buzzard's wing, projected from the blue vault above, drifted lazily over the valley. She was about to put on her hat and rush from the doorway, when she heard a hurried footstep close at hand, and Jack Harrison staggered across the threshold, closing the door violently behind him.

He leaned against it, struggling for breath, and, with his right hand, endeavored to slide into place the heavy bar that fastened it. His left arm hung helpless by his side. The startled Grace saw that a stream of blood was running down his sleeve and trickling upon the bare floor.

"Help me!" he gasped. "They've hit me!"

In an instant, the courageous girl was at his side. With their united exertions, the bar was quickly slid into place. Then she turned and faced him.

"Jack—dear Jack!" she cried, making a dumb appeal in the direction of his wounded arm, "tell me—tell me what has happened!"

He did not at first reply. He made a helpless movement toward the corner where his rifles stood, grasped one of them, and

endeavored to load it. The effort was too much for him. A spasm of pain crossed his pale face. He set the heavy arm down upon the floor and turned to the terrified girl.

"Grace," he said, "it is useless to conceal it; we are surrounded by our enemies, and are prisoners in this house. Our only hope is to make a fight for it. The man I captured yesterday is outside. He is in company with three others; they are mounted and well armed; they fired on me suddenly when I went to the spring. Tell me: can you load a rifle or pistol? Do you know anything of fire-arms?"

The light of a strong resolution shone in the girl's face and flashed in her eyes. She turned to him with white lips.

"I think so," she said. "But, Jack, dear boy, you must not think of that now. You are wounded—you may bleed to death. Let me bandage your arm."

Jack Harrison set his teeth together. "Not till the arms are loaded," he said, firmly. "It is a mere scratch; I can wait."

He winced with pain, as he spoke. "My revolvers are in those holsters—there!—hand them to me. Thank God! they are loaded."

Miss Brevoort took down the heavy belt from the hook where it hung on the wall, and laid it on the toilet-stand close at hand. Jack drew a revolver from its holster; he took his position near the single window of the ranch.

"Now," he said, "the rifle-cartridges are in a box, near the cupboard, in the kitchen. You must find them if you can. I will mount guard here till you get back; these rascals may try to break in at any moment. Quick! Keep away from the kitchen window, and be as careful as you can."

The girl flew on her unfamiliar errand. In a few moments, she returned with the box of cartridges in her hands.

"Good!" Jack exclaimed. "Now, the Winchester!"

She caught up the rifle from its place in the corner, and, taking a handful of cartridges from the box, filled the magazine with a deft ease that surprised Jack. Grace had always felt an interest in fire-arms, and the knowledge she had gained while assisting her brother Tom now stood her in good stead. In spite of the peril of their surroundings, Harrison could scarcely repress a word of admiration.

"You are a treasure indeed!" he said.

He made an effort to loosen his coat, and the girl stepped forward quickly to aid him. A sudden shadow, darkening the window, fell upon them both. Harrison looked up. A fierce face, framed in a bristling black beard, was just drawing away from the window. The bright glare without dazzled the eyes of the intruder, and it was evident from his expression that he had not been able to distinguish objects within the room. As he disappeared from view, his hand fell away from the window-sash where he had been striving to force the fastening.

At the same time a violent blow was struck upon the door outside, causing it to leap upon its hinges. Miss Brevoort clasped her hands in terror.

"Come! come! Open up here!" shouted a gruff voice, with an oath.

For answer, Harrison grasped his six-shooter and stole to the window. From his point of view, he could just see the shoulder of his enemy. The sash and pane stood between them, but his assailant was not three feet away. A blinding flash lit up the room for an instant; there was a jingling of broken glass; and the man staggered back with a low curse. The smoke of the discharge poured through the opening.

There was a scuffle of feet without, and a hurried stampede. A moment later, they heard the shouts of the robbers, calling to one another, and then the neigh of their steeds. Grace breathed a sigh of relief.

"They have taken to their horses," cried Jack, joyfully, "but I reckon there is one less to deal with."

He seated himself in a chair and closed his eyes involuntarily, as if in intense pain. He had grown strangely pale in the interval.

"My arms!" he groaned. "I fear, Grace, I am hurt more than I supposed."

He drew from the pocket of his coat a flask which his trembling fingers with difficulty placed upon the table. Miss Brevoort hurried to his side. She hastily poured out a portion of the spirit into a tin cup which stood near, and held it to his lips.

"Drink!" she said; "it will revive you."

Harrison feebly swallowed the liquor.

"You must take off your coat, Jack," Grace entreated. "Your wound must be bandaged."

Even amid her extreme peril, the love she felt for the wounded man eclipsed all personal considerations. The fearful thought of anything serious happening to him made her faint, but not from horror at the fate which might be hers, exposed to the remorselessness of their foes. In the unselfishness of her solicitude, she did not think of that.

At this moment, there was a volley of rifle-shots from without. They could hear the crash of the bullets as they struck the sides of the house, and a few pieces of plastering fell from the wall.

Harrison opened his eyes.

"They're firing at us from their horses," he said; "but I think the walls are stout enough to turn a bullet. Thank heaven, there is but one window to the ranch!"

Grace put one arm tenderly about him, and gently slipped his coat from his shoulders. The sleeve of his hunting-shirt was drenched with blood. She trembled and turned faint, but the anxiety she felt held her to her task. Summoning all her courage, she stripped back the sleeve quickly and examined the injury. The wound was a deep one, but it was in the fleshy part of the arm, and she believed that the bone was not broken. Could she but stanch the blood, it might not prove serious. She glanced around for something to use as a bandage. Her eye fell upon an old quilt, through which in places the cotton filling protruded. Hastily plucking out several pieces of this, she applied them tenderly to the wound.

But she had nothing with which to bind them in place, and she was in perplexity. A sudden thought occurred to her. With a quick energy, she tore a portion of her skirt into strips, and, applying this to the cotton bats with a skill she did not know she possessed, she secured them tightly and firmly. In her accomplishment of this task, she exerted a nervous strength which surprised her and made Harrison writhe with agony.

It had grown strangely still in the last few moments. There had been no firing, no indication of the presence of their enemies. The silence struck Harrison as ominous. Keeping close in the cover of the wall, he reconnoitred through the broken pane. The staring sunlight shone vividly upon everything without, but no human presence was visible.

He bethought himself of a simple subter-

fuge. Resting the barrel of his Winchester upon the back of a chair, so as to command the opening, he crouched behind it, and directed Grace to place his hat upon the muzzle of the other gun and hold it so as to be visible at the window.

The ruse was successful. A running fire of bullets greeted its appearance, one or two of which struck the woodwork of the window. During this fusillade, Harrison kept up a most vigilant look-out through the opening. As he expected, he was rewarded with a sight of the enemy. In his anxiety to obtain a good view-point, one of the robbers, mounted upon a bay horse, rode out into the open, and Harrison glimpsed him through the broken pane. Dropping his eye to the peep-sight of his rifle, he pulled the trigger. The man reeled in his saddle, at the discharge of the piece, and disappeared from view amid the smoke. A second later, he saw a riderless horse with leaping stirrups dash past the window. His aim had been good.

But Harrison could not divest himself of a vague dread which possessed him, and of which he made no mention to Grace. After the ruse of the hat, there was no more firing, and a second recourse to the expedient had produced no result. What did it mean—this silence on the part of their assailants? Of their number, two were now manifestly either dead or disabled. Could it be that they would give over the assault? From his position, he could command but a small view of the space without, and the uncertainty of his surroundings increased his apprehensions. He was not long held in suspense.

A sudden cloud of black smoke, drifting heavily by the window, filled him with new alarms; in the air was the strong pungent smell of something burning. It flashed over Harrison in an instant that the robbers were trying to burn the house. He remembered a pile of cockle-burs removed from the fleeces of the sheep, that had been carelessly allowed to remain resting against the side of the house. He wondered if these had been used as the nucleus of a bonfire. They would not be readily inflammable, but, once kindled, might smolder indefinitely, and, added to other material, might make their position extremely uncomfortable. The walls of the house were built of adobe and would

resist the flames for a time; but the roof was shingled, and, should the fire reach this, they might be encircled in a whirling vortex of flame which would drive them from their shelter at the mercy of their enemies.

Filled with this new and terrible apprehension, he turned toward Grace. She was seated upon a low stool in the centre of the room, her hands clasped in her lap, her lips parted with the agony of suspense. The terror of the moment had blanched her complexion to the tint of a tea-rose; her great amber eyes were bright with excitement; and the glory of her blonde hair had slipped from its confinement, and shone like an aureola about her, as it rippled down over her back and shoulders. She looked so beautiful, as she sat there, that Jack could not bring himself to acquaint her with the new nature of his fears. She had been so brave, so calm, amid all their peril, that his heart stirred within him, and the memory of his early love for this radiant apparition swept over him in one grand wave of feeling. What mattered it—the foolish misunderstanding, the trivial jealousy, of a bygone year, that had estranged them? Perhaps these few fleeting moments were the last that both should live. He arose, and, drawing near to her, cast an arm tenderly about her.

The girl crept closer to him, in the darkening room. A few sparks amid the eddying smoke flew by the window. They could hear the roar and crackle of the flames without. He felt a tremor as of fear pass over her; the beautiful golden head fell upon his shoulder.

"Does your wound pain you, Jack?"

"Not now," he whispered.

The chivalrous falsehood made her turn her eyes to him, and he read there the candor of their old confession.

Sweet as the thought was to him, his enjoyment of it was but brief; a whirl of flame flashed suddenly by the window, carrying with it a volume of smoke that poured suffocatingly into the room; tongues of fire leaped to the sash, and soon the panes were framed with climbing color that swept its certain and destructive way to the low roof. Jack seized a half-filled water-bucket that stood near and dashed it over both window and wall.

He was too late. Already they could hear

the climbing currents of flame writhing and surging over the eaves. The shingles began to curl and part with the fervent heat, and sparks and burning bits of wood fell like fiery blossoms into the room below. They could distinguish the exulting shouts of their foes. Half stupefied by the blinding smoke and desperate with the peril of their position, they retreated into a remote corner. Screening the person of Grace with his own body, Jack drew his revolver, determined to make a last stand.

At this moment, above the roar and whirl of the flames, they heard cries and startled exclamations from without. The earth shook as if with the tread of many galloping horses. There were shouts and hoarse voices, mingled with the rattle of fire-arms and the sounds of a sudden strife and confusion, that swept with increasing clamor round the house.

Breathless between hope and fear as to the cause of this sudden tumult, Harrison and Grace remained silent and listening eagerly. The heat scorched them, the blinding smoke stifled them; but, clasped in one another's arms, they awaited their fate. All at once, there was a crash and jingle of glass in the adjoining room; the door of the kitchen was torn open suddenly, and the leader of the robbers—the man Harrison had captured—dashed into the room.

He was evidently closely pursued, for his features wore a hunted expression. His face was bleeding in several places where he had burst his way through the window, and he brandished a cocked revolver in either hand. Facing about, he raised both weapons, just as Harrison brought his own revolver to a level. Grace covered her face with her hands and caught her breath.

The next moment, it seemed as if all the batteries of Inferno had been suddenly called into play; from all sides of the room and from the kitchen doorway, a succession of blinding flashes crossed and recrossed it with the rapidity of lightning; the air was full of sulphurous vapor and flying splinters; and the walls shook beneath the unearthly din as if with the throes of an earthquake. It ceased as suddenly. Grace had fallen to her knees in the extremity of her terror. Through the smoke that filled the room, a tall figure bounded from the kitchen doorway, crossed the room, and raised her to her feet. She opened her eyes, to find

the strong arms of her brother Tom about her.

"You are safe? You are unhurt?" he cried.

A sudden gust of wind, sweeping from window to doorway, cleared the room and made objects visible. The leader of the robbers lay prone and ghastly in that uncertain light, his hands still grasping his smoking pistols, where he had fallen. The eyes of Grace ran wildly past him to another object that lay upon the floor. In an instant, she had torn herself from Tom's embrace and thrown herself beside it.

"Jack, darling, speak to me!" she moaned.

Thomas Brevoort stooped down beside the kneeling figure and himself examined the prostrate man. At length, he raised his eyes to the imploring face of his sister.

"Do not worry, Grace," he said; "I think he has simply fainted from exhaustion."

* * * * *

Thomas Brevoort was right in his opinion; but it was many days before Jack Harrison was himself again. An hour later, when he first recovered consciousness, it was to find himself in a covered wagon, proceeding he knew not whither, but under the armed escort of Sheriff Mosely and Thomas Brevoort. For a few moments, he lay quite still, oppressed by a dull throbbing in his temples and a feeling of fever in his veins. He stared helplessly about him in the dim twilight of the vehicle. Then he attempted to rise. A familiar figure seated beside him lifted a warning finger, and a voice, which even in his enfeebled condition thrilled him with a sweetness ineffable, lulled him to repose. He sank back again, and knew no more.

And so, through weary weeks that seemed endless in their succession of pain and suffering, he was sustained and soothed. Of his illness, he had never a clear impression, and surrounding objects seemed to change about him with the bewildering perversity of a dream. He had a glimpse of himself lying upon a broad porch, surrounded by climbing vines and verdure, patiently awaiting the arrival of somebody who gave him greater agony than before. Then the scene changed mysteriously to a spacious room; pictures were on the walls; books and flowers were round about him; but ever beside him was the same sweet presence, brooding over him,

anticipating his slightest wants, until, in his weakness and delirium, he came to regard it as a ministering angel that watched beside his bed.

And indeed, its sympathy and self-sacrifice are celestial characteristics, the comparison was not greatly forced. Grace never realized how the days went by, nor where the hours fled. Sustained by a devotion that defied fatigue, she gave herself no rest, and knew no comfort save that of the invalid. In her absorbed state of mind, the particulars of the search and rescue, so often repeated by her brother Tom, were hardly heeded. She only gathered, in a vague way, that the Sheriff had happened to observe her on her lonely ride, when she had first started in pursuit of the antelope; that the escape of his prisoner, and the consequent pursuit, had thrown Mosely and Brevoort together; and that the discovery of her horse in the neighborhood of the cabin had led to a surmise of the real state of facts.

Neither did the anxiety that consumed her permit her to appreciate the puzzled bewilderment of her brother, when he saw her thus suddenly transformed into a professional nurse. To a man like Thomas Brevoort, who had always been in total ignorance of this hidden romance in the life of his sister, the change in her was a complete mystery. It was Mrs. Brevoort who first enlightened him. The latter had always been the friend and confidante of Grace, and she took it upon herself to acquaint her husband with the true state of affairs. His amazement was complete; but, after several interviews with his wife on this most serious of topics, he was

fain to develop an exaggerated interest in Grace, and to indulge, after the manner of guardian brothers, in mischievous criticism of her attentions. This attitude on his part, however, was met by an annoyance so pathetic that the good fellow, out of sheer sympathy, desisted.

So the days came and went, until the girl's patient care was rewarded, and the man so nursed and tended came forth again into the warm air and sunshine. It was a glorious afternoon, and brother and sister were seated together on the broad porch—the latter still following with caressing eyes the figure of the convalescent, who, rejoicing in his new-found liberty, was strolling about the grounds.

"So you've finally decided to come round to my view, and not return North," said Tom, suddenly; he had been gravely regarding Grace.

"Who told you that, pray?" inquired his sister, with a sudden flush.

"Oh! it's all decided," Tom returned, laughing. "Don't try any of your mysteries on me, my dear. The idea of your keeping this thing away from me so long! I haven't quite forgiven you yet. Jack told me everything, last night, and we sat up and smoked cigars over the situation until the small hours of the morning. Permit me to congratulate the future Mrs. Harrison, and cheerfully extend my fraternal blessing. Perhaps you will be interested to know that I have a very high opinion of your beloved. At any rate, we've shaken hands on the matter, and decided, under the circumstances, to join ranches."

IF WE KNEW.

BY GENESEE RICHARDSON.

THESE are gems of wondrous brightness
Ofttimes lying at our feet,
And we pass them, walking thoughtless
Down the busy crowded street;
If we knew, our pace would slacken—
We would step more oft with care,
Lest our careless feet be treading
To the earth some jewel rare.

If we knew what hearts are aching
For the comfort we might bring;
If we knew what souls are yearning
For the sunshine we might fling;

If we knew what feet are weary
Walking pathways roughly laid:
We would quickly hasten forward,
Stretching forth our hands to aid.

If we knew what friends around us
Feel a want they never tell—
That some word that we have spoken
Pained or wounded where it fell:
We would speak in accents tender,
To each friend we chance to meet—
We would give to each one freely
Smiles of sympathy so sweet.

A RAILWAY EPISODE.

BY MISS LEE M'CRAE.



It was a peculiarly November day, one which calls for the heart-sunshine which all provident souls have stored up for such weather. Next to a jail, there is no more depressing spot than a small station; and on the platform of one of the most dingy of its kind, on this most dreary of all days, two young persons were walking.

The gentleman was talking rapidly, and ended by saying:

"I wish you would not persist, Ella. The idea of going alone on an old accommodation train, when the express will pass only an hour later! And—well, to tell you the truth, I don't like to see my sister do it."

"Oh, nonsense! I think it is very 'accommodating' of the train to take me down so much earlier. There's a motherly-looking old woman getting on now—see? She'll be my chaperone. If I should wait for the express, you know I would not reach Fort Scott until eight o'clock, and the wedding is at half-past eight; so I would have to go without the 'wedding-garment': and what girl could bear to do that? Isn't it odd," deftly changing the subject, "how much interest people always take in weddings? Indeed, there are but two things that can arouse universal unflinching interest in human-kind—love and money."

"You forget politics!" put in Ned.

"Oh, the endless incomprehensible subject! Don't begin on that! Ah, the porter is bringing my trunk at last; so help me on this much-abused train—it will start in a few minutes."

"What a dingy old affair it is!" Ned exclaimed, as he surveyed the interior of the car, which was partitioned off—the fore part for the baggage, and the rear for passengers.

"I don't envy you the trip, I assure you. Good-bye, dear. Congratulate the happy pair for me."

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He swung himself off the platform, waved his hand, and disappeared.

Ella Sutherland turned from the dreary view without, which the early winter twilight was making more dismal each moment, to find that the old lady was the only passenger beside herself, and that she was already half asleep. So Ella leaned back in her seat and settled down to quiet reverie.

Presently, however, she was roused by a half-angry, half-frightened voice from the adjoining compartment, saying with a broad Scotch accent:

"Dinna I tell't ye, mon, I'll na drink yer auld stuff? Awa' wi' ye!"

"Why, my lad, you're a fool, to refuse a drop with your friends," answered a persuasive voice; "men in America never do. Come now—just half this glass; here—you must. There—that will do. If you want to make friends in this country, that's the way to do it. Ha! ha!"

Ella's seat was near the partition, and the transom over the door, being broken, admitted the voices very plainly—even the sound of force used to compel the foreign lad to drink the "auld stuff," whatever it might be.

She remembered, with a shudder, Ned's advice to wait for the express, and his remark about these train-men being "the hardest set on the road," and concluded to tell the old lady at the other end of the car what she had heard.

"I don't like the looks of it, either," was the reply; "but, of course, we can't interfere and protect the boy. I will come and sit near you, and we will keep our ears open."

They listened intently for quite a while in vain. Finally, there came more indistinct sounds and then these words:

"Pshaw! he'll sleep for hours. What're you 'fraid of? It's in this pocket. Hold his coat open. I spotted it from the way he felt around when we weren't looking. Pinned up! I'll be blowed! Awfully cautious, weren't you, my tenderfoot?"

"Whew—ee! what a haul!" added another

rough voice. "Remember, Bob, it's half and half."

"Aftah my thuty dollahs." The Southern accent plainly betrayed the conductor himself, and made the women gaze at one another with pale despairing faces.

Then followed a fierce quarrel over the division of the spoils, interspersed with fearful oaths.

"Is there a station between here and Fort Scott?" whispered Ella.

"Yes—two, I think."

At this moment, the whistle sounded. She tore a letter from her pocket and penciled these words on the envelope:

"Telegraph for policemen to meet No. 7 at Fort Scott. Arrest conductor and two men. Robbery."

The train came to a standstill; Ella slipped to the rear end of the car and cautiously opened the door.

"You must not try to get off—the conductor will see you and come and gag us!" expostulated the old lady, half dead with fright.

But it was dusk; a light snow was falling; and, peering around the corner of the car, Ella waited until the conductor was busy with some freight, and then flew to the station window.

"Do this, for God's sake—and do it quickly!" she gasped, as she flung the paper in, scarcely waiting to note if anyone were there to receive it, and sped back to the already moving train.

She sank into her seat exhausted, and covered her face with her hands; but the old lady kept her post at the keyhole. Presently, she bent over Ella and whispered excitedly:

"They've remembered us, and are afraid we heard 'em. They're coming to see. Oh, what'll we do?"

"Go to your seat and play deaf; I'll be asleep," instantly answered the quick-witted girl.

Before the old lady had fairly reached her seat, the conductor entered.

"Anything I can do for you, ma'am?" he said, eying her suspiciously. But he had to repeat his question.

"Eh? Speakin' to me, sir? Yes, a chilly night. I'm a-huntin' that draught. How far is it tew Fort Scott frum here?"

"About eight miles, ma'am."

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"Eighty miles! You don't say! Then I must 'a drempt a lot. I thought we wur 'most there."

Satisfied, he turned toward Ella.

With perfect abandon and actress-like grace she lay back in the seat, her head in that uncomfortable position in which the hat nod so often leaves it, and one ungloved hand hanging nervelessly over her satchel.

He leaned forward and scrutinized her closely. Not an eyelash quivered. He touched her hand in a cat-like way, but not a muscle moved. Oh, the length of that moment!

At last he passed on into the other compartment; but scarcely had the door closed before she had her ear to the keyhole, and heard him say:

"No wind to fear from that quarter; but I tell you, Bob, we ought to get this boy off, or he might prove an elephant on our hands at Fort Scott. You know we only run to that far."

"There's a station 'tween here and there? Well, we'll just dump him off, and tell the agent he's drunk, and half-witted at that."

"All right; you can play his big brother for the occasion."

"We will soon be there?"

"Yes, in three minutes."

Ella repeated this conversation to her companion, and, clasping her hands, said piteously:

"The poor boy! Can't we help him, after all? How can I prove it to the policemen, if they do meet us, and he is not on board?"

"If they put him off," answered the old lady, "I will get down, just as the train starts, and take care of him. Don't worry, child—they won't see me."

"Then you must follow on the express, and bring him with you, and I'll tell the policemen you are coming," added Ella, excitedly.

The station was reached, and the boy, too drunk or too thoroughly drugged to make resistance, was carried out by the burly "Bob," and deposited unceremoniously on a bench.

The tears rose to Ella's eyes as she looked back, in the dim light, and saw the dear old lady bending over him, holding his limp hands and smoothing his hair in a motherly way.

The conductor came in once, to collect

the fare of a good-natured-looking drummer who had entered; but he was hurried, and, to Ella's great relief, left without noticing the old lady's absence.

"Fort Scott!" shouted the brakeman, and scarcely had Ella risen from her seat before she saw the brass buttons of the policemen, and, in a few moments more, the conductor, brakeman, "Bob," and even the astonished drummer were under arrest and hurried off into the station.

Ella's story was soon told, but she was obliged to wait the coming of the express that her strange evidence might be corroborated.

After watching the robbers led off to be searched and imprisoned, and seeing the old

lady start for home with the dazed half-conscious boy still under her protection, Ella took a cab and was driven to the brilliantly lighted mansion of Judge Mexam.

Hastily removing her wraps, she was ushered into the parlors just in time to hear the last words of the wedding ceremony. Many surprised half-contemptuous glances were cast upon her plain check traveling-suit, until, at the table, after the happy pair had been duly toasted, the host rose and said:

"I propose that we drink to the heroine of the hour, Miss Ella Sutherland."

Then followed the story in glowing words; but, before the glasses were raised, Ella said eagerly:

"Please include the dear old lady!"

WATCHING.

BY AGNES L. PRATT.

'Mid the hush of the star-lit gloaming,
Where the shadows softly fell
Across the path through the meadow,
From the trees in the grassy dell,
A woman, sad-eyed and patient,
In her lonely woodland home,
Watched till her heart grew weary
For one who would never come—

Watched till the lovelight faded
From her saddened eyes away—
Watched till the nightfall darkened
The earth at the close of day,
Then slowly turned from her vigil
And said: "He is false to me!"
And wept for her dream that had vanished,
For the joys that might never be.

Far away from the wind-swept meadow—

Far, far from her sorrowing eyes—
'Neath the shadow of death's own angel,
The one she had watched for lies;
Eternity's mystic symbol
Is set on that marble brow,
And the heart which had beat for her only
Is hushed into silence now.

"He is false!" she moans 'mid her weeping.
He is dead; but how can she know?
So she sorrows for vows that are broken,
For hopes that lie shattered below.
But, up in the infinite distance
Where glows the blest city of light,
She will learn that her love was not wasted—
The morning will dawn out of night.

MOONLIGHT AND MUSIC.

BY HARRIET F. CROCKER.

THE silvery moonbeams gild the little waves—
The lake lies calm and quiet, fast asleep,
While o'er the waters deep our light skiff glides,
And from the shore come strains of music sweet.

Moonlight and music! loved by every heart,
But doubly dear to ours, it seems, to-night;
Faintly the melody comes to us here,
And on the lake's still breast the moon lies white.

Afar, the woods of deepest, darkest pine
Stand bathed in splendor by the moon's soft ray,
And, over all, the sweetest silence falls,
Save the sweet sound of music far away.

Gently we glide and drift and float along
Near islands green, transfigured in the light,
And from our happy hearts bursts forth a song
In rapturous praises of this queenly night.

RESCUED BY CUSTER'S MEN.

BY ANNA LATHAM.



CHAPTER I.

THE summer of 1872 was a season of fearful peril to the scattered settlers of Dakota and Montana. A large proportion of them were immigrants, ignorant of the

dangers that surrounded

them on the border, and knowing nothing of the horrors of Indian warfare till awakened from their dreams of peace and plenty by the blood-curdling war-whoops resounding around their cabins.

The powerful and warlike Sioux, jealous of the encroachments of the whites, angered by the cheating of Government agents, and urged on by their own fierce tempers, donned their war-paint, many of the young braves going to join Sitting Bull's camp, while others roamed the country in bands, committing fearful depredations on defenseless ranchmen and outlying settlements.

General Custer, commanding the Seventh Regiment of Regular Cavalry, stationed at Fort Lincoln on the Missouri, taking six companies of cavalry supported by three of infantry, made a rapid march into the Indian country, to punish the marauders and drive them back to their reservations.

An unclouded June sun smiled down upon this fine array of blue-and-yellow, halted for their mid-day rest and refreshment in the midst of a vast prairie that, on three sides, stretched to the horizon. In the northwest, a range of low hills broke its dull monotony. The summer's heat had not yet curled and shriveled every green thing as it does later; but the broad plain was waving with grass and gay with brilliant flowers.

General Custer had ridden to the rear, to inspect, with his usual care, the wagon and mule trains—for nothing was too insignificant for his notice that concerned the comfort of his men. Close behind him,

almost as well mounted as himself, pressed the orderly who had just dashed down to him from the head of the column.

Reining-in his fiery steed at the head of his command, the general was quickly surrounded by a mingled mass of officers and orderlies.

"Runners in our front," said Captain Custer, handing him a powerful field-glass.

"Yes," replied the general, after a long and earnest survey, "they are scouts, and the running of the first is like the running of Bloody Knife. He comes, no doubt, with important information."

"What horsemen are those just rising the crest of the divide?" eagerly inquired the captain. "A pursuit?"

"I think not," replied the general, after a searching gaze. "There are but two riders, and one looks more like a squaw than a warrior."

"Possibly it's a decoy," suggested an officer, "and a larger body of the enemy may be on the other side of the divide."

"They ride," replied Custer, "as though they themselves were pursued. I do not think the enemy would dare attack us on the open plain, even with greatly superior numbers; however, it will do no harm to be ready either to march or to fight." And, in a clear ringing tone, he shouted: "Bugler, sound 'boots and saddles'!"

With the first notes of that stirring call, the men sprang to their feet, thrusting half-eaten rations into their haversacks, and, almost as quickly as one can tell it, were in their saddles, presenting, to the quick eye of the general, long lines of erect soldierly figures curbing their restive horses with steady hands. Nearer and nearer came the Indian runners. With characteristic impatience, he galloped forward to meet them, followed by his orderly and a few officers.

"How!" said the general, as his favorite scout reached his side; "what news, Bloody Knife?"

In terse Indian language, the scout told him that he had crossed the trails of

numerous hostile bands of Sioux; and that, after many successful attacks upon the whites, they were concentrating on the Tongue River, loaded with plunder and bringing scores of captives.

"Who are those that follow you?" asked the general, pointing toward the mysterious travelers, now at the foot of the hills and just entering upon the plain.

Waving the proffered glass aside, the Indian fixed his keen eyes, shaded by one brown hand, on the advancing party.

"Palefaces," said he, sententiously. "one squaw, two papoose; white man, arm hurt; carries gun across horse's neck; looks back every step—thinks Sioux on every side."

"That is true," said the captain, who had been studying them closely. "They are escaped prisoners or refugees, in momentary danger of being scalped."

"Go back," said the general, turning to an orderly, "and order the troops forward. Send an ambulance with all speed. Take horses, and don't spare them."

Away flew the orderly, and the party rode forward to meet the approaching strangers.

On dashed the cavalcade, and now they could plainly see what the Indian had described at a much greater distance: that the foremost rider was a woman mounted on a large gray horse. In her arms, she bore an infant; astride the horse's neck rode a boy of five; while, at her back, a girl of ten clung trembling to her mother. Behind them, on a black horse, came the father, one arm in a sling and his rifle across his horse's neck, as the scout had said.

All were fair-haired and blue-eyed—unmistakably German. Tears of joy ran down their pale faces at the sight of their deliverers, and thanksgivings fell from their lips.

Tenderly the kind-hearted officers lifted the mother and her tired children to the ground, while the general warmly extended his hand to the father, who, as he approached, respectfully gave the military salute.

At his side, the man wore an old cavalry sabre; his shirt was soaked with blood from his wounded shoulder; about his head was tied a handkerchief, also blood-stained; and a rivulet of blood coursing down his sunburned cheek showed the wound was severe. Under his shaggy eyebrows shone wide-open fearless blue eyes—while, in spite of his wounds and

fatigue, he bore himself with a soldierly air that at once took the eye of the general.

"You have been attacked by Indians," said Custer. "When did it happen—and where?"

"Ve haf lised," replied the man, "at Bald Butte—how far from here, I cannot tell. Ve haf tree neighbors—all German. The night before last, mine leetle girl Bretta had gone to spend der evening mit dem, ven, all at once, ve hear dreadful yells und screams—our neighbors' houses all one blaze. Ve haf no light—trees all around; dey no see us at first. Ve saddle our horses in der dark, und start to run away; ve not go far when a big Indian rose up before us und fire upon me.

"See," he said, pushing back his gray flannel shirt and showing his shoulder, closely bound with bloody cloths evidently torn from their clothing. "Den he dhry pull me off mine horse; ve fight; mine horse shy vone side. Den I hit him mit mine old sabre dot I carry in der vhaars long ago; he lay down in der road und not want to fight any more."

"You have been a soldier, then?" said Custer, with interest.

"Yaw; ich was at Sarlowa, und ich von dis," replied he, showing, on his broad sunburnt breast, a small steel cross suspended from his neck by a silver chain. "Our goot emperor gif it me mit his own hand. Ich tired of vhaars; I dake mine leetle family und come here. I know nothing about Indians. Agent say: 'All right; soldiers all around—dey take care ob you.' But ah! Gott in Himmel! mine leetle Bretta—mine leetle girl!" and the father's grief burst forth afresh.

"What is your name?" asked a young orderly, riding close to the German and gazing eagerly in his face.

"Van Ness, sir."

"And is Bretta Van Ness your daughter?"

"She is, sir—mine own dear leetle girl."

"What of her? Where is she?" asked the young man, the blood receding from his cheek, and his eye growing dark and stern.

"I haf every reason to believe she is a prisoner in der hands ob der savages," replied the stricken father.

"How do you know that she is a prisoner?" again questioned the young soldier.

"I vhas sthandin' in mine door, when I hear her cry 'Fader! fader!' und scream. I hid mine schildren in der bush, und, when der Indians gone, I creep back to vind her. All mine neighbors dead—every one—Bretta not dere."

Leaning his head on his hand, supported by his gun-barrel, he sobbed as only a man overwhelmed by sorrow can, while the low weeping of the mother mingled with the wails of her infant, at she in vain tried to soothe it.

"General," said the orderly, turning to that officer, "with your permission, I will go in search of this man's daughter, and snatch her from her captors, or perish in so doing."

A look of wonder overspread the faces of that circle, as they noted the deep intensity of his tones, the tight-drawn lips, and the pallor of his face, that showed even through its deep bronzing.

"Where had he seen Bretta Van Ness, and why did her fate move him so deeply?" was the wondering comment of his fellow-soldiers.

"It would be madness," said Custer, after a prolonged pause, during which time he keenly eyed the young soldier; "sheer madness! Why, man, your life would not be worth a straw, a mile from the column; the creeping savages would pick you off in no time. Better leave it to the movements of the regiment to bring them to terms. Besides, this band have probably retreated to their village or joined the main body of the enemy, and pursuit would be worse than useless."

"The greater need, then," replied the brave fellow, "that Bretta's friends stir themselves in her behalf. If they cannot save her a bullet through her heart will put her beyond the reach of those incarnate fiends."

The brave and generous Custer strongly felt the force of these words. He shuddered at the horrors confronting this fair young girl, but was keenly alive to the perils incurred by her would be deliverer.

"I will go with him, general, if I can be spared from the service," said a young man who now stepped forward. "I know this country very well—was through here when looking for the hostile camp. I think I know where those German families lived, and believe I can strike the trail of this band within twelve hours."

"But, Reynolds," said Custer, "it is extremely perilous!"

"I know all the chances for and against," returned the scout, "and am willing to take them."

"Thank you, and God bless you!" exclaimed Harland, warmly clasping the hand of this bravest of brave men.

"Well," said the general, springing lightly to the ground, "since you are bound to go, I wish you to have every advantage that can be given you. I cannot spare a detachment—but here, Harland, you must take my horse. Vic'll bring you through if any horse can. She's a Kentucky thoroughbred, and there's not her match on the plains for speed or endurance."

"Unless it is mine," said Captain Custer, "and Reynolds can have him."

Both men protested against taking their officers' horses, saying they would be needed in the coming campaign; but the general declared "they had good enough horses in reserve, as they did not anticipate the necessity of running away from the Indians, and, if Reynolds's theory was correct, they would be back before a blow could be struck at the enemy."

Still urged by their commander to lose no more time in vain protests, they sprang into their saddles, and, bidding the German mother—who, with her children and wounded husband, had been tenderly placed in an ambulance—a hasty farewell, dashed off across the plain.

"Go back, Blucher! go back!" shouted Harland, as the general's great stag-hound bounded along by his side. But Blucher had no idea of returning to headquarters for his congé, and kept steadily on, only falling far enough to the rear to be out of reach of any missile that might be thrown at him.

"Let him go," at length said the scout. "There is a great affection between him and the horse you ride; he goes where she goes, and sleeps by her side at night. He has a keen nose for the trail, too, and never gives tongue following it."

"If we're lucky enough to find the red-skins, he might help us out in a 'hand to hand,' you know; he has scars enough to prove him a good fighter. Come on, old dog!"

In his delight at being permitted to go, the dog fairly bounded over the horse, and

jumped barking at her nose, while she whined and playfully struck at him with her forefeet.

On the crest of the divide, the soldiers paused, waved a last adieu to their comrades, took a last look at the old flag they might never see again, and then plunged down through chaparral and cactus to the plain below.

CHAPTER II.

IT WAS an easy matter to follow the broad trail made by the flying family, and, no signs of Indians appearing, they traveled at a good rate of speed, and, late in the afternoon, drew rein on the top of the next divide and looked down on another vast plain, through which a sluggish stream crept to mingle its waters with the far distant Missouri.

To the west lay the great butte country, which, the scout said, "was filled with narrow and deep gulches, where the Indians could find a hundred secure hiding-places; and beyond, where the mountains were purpling in the setting sun, Sitting Bull was thought to have his camp."

"Do you see that film of gray smoke rising against the dark line of trees far in our front? That," said Reynolds, "probably marks the scene of one of their last attacks; now, by diverging from this trail and striking diagonally across the prairie to where those cottonwoods outline the river's banks, we shall probably find their trail. I only hope there'll be daylight enough left to see it before we camp."

An hour's hard riding, and they reached the first of the sentinel-like cottonwood-trees, and, as they plunged deeper and deeper into their shade, they began to look carefully for Indian signs. Both men had dismounted and were closely scrutinizing each leaf and blade of grass, when a deep growl from the dog caused them to look up. A short distance ahead of them stood an Indian, his gun reversed and his hand raised in token of peace.

With a savage snarl, Blucher sprang at his throat. By a dextrous movement, the Indian caught him under the jaw, and, the next moment, the dog crouched at his feet, licking his moccasins and whining softly.

"Bloody Knife, by all that's good!" cried the scout. And, springing forward, each grasped a hand of the friendly savage.

"Ouches tell-a-me come," said Bloody Knife, and then, in his own tongue, which Reynolds understood, informed them he had taken an Indian pony recently captured, and, following a more direct route where he found good traveling, he had reached the river before them. "And here," said he, "is the trail."

A few feet from where they were standing, the earth showed unmistakable signs of a party of about twenty having passed, but no trace of the captive girl. In one place, the trail dipped down to the river, showing the Indians had stopped for water; and their own horses, being sadly in need of similar refreshment, were led by the scout to the river's edge and drank deeply of its yellow tide. Meanwhile, Harland and the Indian followed along the trail, unwilling to lose a moment of daylight. A few rods brought them to a large sycamore-tree with wide-spreading branches. Here the short grass was much trampled, and the remains of a fire showed food had been prepared.

Bloody Knife next turned his keen eyes on the massive trunk.

"See," whispered he; "paleface stand here."

On one side, the grass was much trodden, and, following the movement of the dusky finger, Harland saw the bark was broken and worn, as by a rope or lariat bound tightly around it.

"And see," he cried: "here are gashes made by hatchets! My God! the red devils have amused themselves by throwing their tomahawks at her golden head! What has she not suffered?"

He turned away, to hide the emotion that almost overpowered him at this proof of their barbarous treatment.

A guttural ejaculation from the Indian caused him to turn back quickly, to see him deftly untangling from the rough bark a thread of long yellow hair.

"Thank God for that!" said Reynolds, coming up at that moment with the horses. "We will yet save her."

"God willing!" added Harland, with a deep-drawn breath.

The last gleam of daylight had now faded from the western sky, and the shadows of the great buttes, falling across their path, deepened and intensified the gloom till the keen eyes of the Indian could no longer

see the trail. Still he pressed on with stealthy steps, his attentive ear analyzing even the cries of the night-birds and the far-off howls of some wild animal, pausing till he made sure it was what it seemed to be.

For a mile or more, they pushed on in this manner, when suddenly the Indian, rising from a listening posture—his ear to the ground—drew his pony one side and directed the others to do the same.

To a whispered "What is it?" he simply answered: "Sioux—sh!"

They had barely quieted their horses, when their strained ears caught the click of a pony's hoof striking against a stone. Each scout, taking his horse firmly by the bits, patted and smoothed his nose to keep him from neighing at the presence of other horses.

Presently, a bulky shape showed in the darkness, then another and another, till seven warriors had filed along past them, so near that they could have touched them with their rifles. Blucher's body trembled with rage, and the first note of a deep growl rumbled in his capacious throat; but a vigorous kick in the side from the scout's foot stopped his growl, and breath too, for a time. After the file of warriors came their ponies, bearing heavy loads that crashed through the bushes on either hand—game, it was afterward known to have been. Silent as statues stood horses and men, till the last footfall had died away—then the Indian, dropping on the ground, remained long in a listening attitude. Starting to his feet, he pushed rapidly forward, followed by the others. They had covered another mile in this way, when, turning sharply to their left, he led them deep into the bushes and halted at the foot of a huge rock. With the muttered word "Reconnoitre," he was gone.

Long they waited, till dark thoughts of possible treachery began to fill their minds—waited till the tired horses noisily champed their bits and stepped about on the uneven ground. They had drawn close together, in order to consult in regard to the advisability of going on without him, when, like a shadow of the night, he rose at their side.

"Come," he whispered; "leave horses and come."

The animals were tethered, and the dog ordered to stay and watch them. After a sharp

scramble up what seemed a rough mountain side, they found themselves at the top of a high bluff overlooking a long narrow valley. Carefully parting the bushes that fringed its edge, a wild scene burst upon their startled vision: At the farther end of the glade, a large fire was burning, lighting up with fitful gleams and flashes the rugged faces of the rocks that hemmed in the little valley on three sides, and bringing into red relief the trunks of forest-trees that, on its farther edge, seemed crowding upon the plain like the ranks of an advancing army. Around the fire, several squaws were grouped, broiling venison for their masters' suppers. A few rods away and nearer the centre of the opening, a tall post had been set in the ground, and to it, bound hand and foot, was their prisoner, the girl they were seeking.

Around her circled in a wild dance twenty or more warriors, singing a monotonous chant, to which they stamped and gestured, occasionally breaking into a whoop, and brandishing their tomahawks and knives close to her head. So still she stood—or rather hung, for she drooped heavily on the thongs that bound her arms—that the scouts thought her already dead. But suddenly a squaw, becoming excited by their wild dancing, seized a burning fagot from the fire, and, rushing into the circle of warriors, applied it to her bare shoulders. A piercing scream rose on the air, and the whoops and yells of the fiendish crew were redoubled, while the squaw circled round and round in the dance, touching the shrinking flesh of the poor girl as long as the brand continued burning.

When they ceased their gyrations, two warriors stepped forward and began to untie the hard knotted thongs that bound her to the stake. Again a scream of mortal terror pierced the night. Instantly the scouts brought their rifles to their shoulders, and two locks simultaneously clicked.

"Not yet," said Reynolds; "when we do fire, you aim at her head, and I at her heart."

A deep groan answered him.

Released from her bonds, she dropped helplessly at their feet, for she neither moved nor stirred. To their intense relief, the squaws now left the fire, mingled with the men, and proceeded to tie her hands and feet, while her body was again securely bound to the stake. The men, gathering around the fire,

greedily devoured the food prepared for them, washing it down with copious draughts of "fire-water," of which they seemed to have a plentiful supply. Their meal finished, they rolled themselves in their blankets and lay down about the fire, their heads to the blaze and their feet outward. One big warrior, striding to the edge of the woods, sat down, his back to a tree, his gun across his lap, as sentinel, while the squaws, bringing two long poles, laid them across the body of their prisoner and lay down in a circle around her, disposing themselves in such a manner that a squaw lay on each end of the poles.

"That is hopeful," whispered Reynolds; "if they thought there was the least danger of an attack, they would never leave the squaws to guard the prisoner, or go to sleep in that careless manner. It is evident they feel perfectly safe."

Long they waited for sleep to close every eye of the drunken crew. At length, Bloody Knife rose and motioned the others to follow. Silent as shadows, they descended the western slope of the bluff, the Indian in advance. Fortunately the wind was rising, and the swaying and creaking of branches greatly favored their movements. Once the sentinel rose, apparently listening intently, his strong features and figure making a huge silhouette against the light of the camp-fire. At length he sat down, drawing his blanket about him and holding his rifle in the hollow of his arm. Nearer and nearer to the watchful Sioux crept Bloody Knife, a long bright blade in his hand. The hearts of the scouts stood still when he was near enough to touch the robe of this living statue.

Suddenly, without a cry or groan, he fell forward on his face and never moved. The knife of his enemy had entered his heart.

For some moments, Bloody Knife lay in the shadow of the tree, then rising, motioned the scouts to approach.

"Go," he said, "kill squaw, take paleface; me stay here."

With cat-like tread, they crept around till they were exactly opposite the circle of squaws. Then Harland went boldly into the light and made an attempt to step within the narrow cordon, in order to cut the thongs that bound the prisoner. Instantly a squaw sprang up, but, before she could utter a warning cry, he struck her a tremendous blow between the eyes, that effectually silenced

her. The motion given to the pole by this action awoke the squaw on the opposite side, who, in the act of springing to her feet, received an arrow in her throat from the bow of Bloody Knife, and fell back dead. Drawing the stunned squaw one side, he knelt beside the girl and placed the palm of his hand firmly over her mouth. Her blue eyes flew open with a great horror in them.

"Be brave," he whispered; "we will save you." The eyes closed again, while tears rolled from under her long brown lashes.

With a sharp knife, he cut the thongs about her wrists and the lariat that bound her to the stake. To get her feet free without waking the squaws who lay on the ends of the second pole was the next task. Stepping softly between them, he had almost cut the cord that bound her, when a squaw sprang up, but was instantly brained by a blow from the butt of Reynolds's rifle. Harland lifted the girl from the ground and dashed with her into the forest shades. The remaining squaw sprang up, with a yell that caused every Indian around the fire to bound to his feet and rush for his weapons. Reynolds aimed a blow at her head, and an arrow flew out of the darkness; but it only pierced her shoulder, causing her to utter terrible cries.

The scouts placed the helpless and almost unconscious girl in the shelter of a tree-trunk, and, dropping on one knee, brought their rifles to their shoulders, to meet the rush of their infuriated enemies.

At that moment, the report of a rifle rang out from the other side of the valley, then another and another, and each time an Indian rolled on the ground. Dazed by their late potations and the suddenness of the attack, they appeared for a moment bewildered, and then, with fearful yells, rushed into the woods in search of their hidden foe and to gain the cover of the trees.

The howling and firing receded until it came faint and far from the depths of the forest, and the scouts, knowing that Bloody Knife, with his breech-loader, was making this diversion in their favor, lost no time in skirting the open with their precious charge, and were looking hurriedly for the path by which the Indians descended to the plain, when Bloody Knife appeared, and, swinging Bretta to his shoulder, sprang lightly up the rocks.

In a few moments, they had reached their

horses, and the Indian resigned his burden to her lover.

Bloody Knife led the van of the little procession, while Reynolds, calm and cool as at the beginning of the fight, brought up the rear, pausing often to listen for sounds of pursuit. Soon the great tree was reached that was fraught with such terrors for Bretta; but they rode quickly past, and she was not allowed to see it.

They halted where the trail led down to the river, and the horses again drank their fill from the waters now sparkling in the light of the rising moon. Pursuit was certain in the morning, and, in order to confuse their foes, they determined to follow as nearly as practicable the trail made the preceding afternoon by Harland and the scout.

The keen eyes of the Indian soon found it, and in single file they traversed it as rapidly as the nature of the ground and the condition of their horses would allow. They traveled in this manner till the moon set, when, feeling quite secure from pursuit until daybreak, they decided to camp and take a few hours of much-needed rest. The horses were carefully picketed; two blankets, raised on sticks a little way from the ground, made a shelter for them all, the men taking turns as sentinel. Blucher was company for each in turn, and gave them a wonderful sense of security and companionship. At the first faint streak of daylight, the little camp was astir; a hasty breakfast from their haversacks eaten, a draught of river-water from their canteens drunk, and they were in their saddles, following closely the trail of the day before.

They had reached the divide, and the men, dismounted, were toiling up the steep ascent, when a cry from the Indian caused them to turn, and, to their horror and dismay, they beheld a large body of redskins, double the number they had fought the evening before, coming after them at the greatest speed their ponies were capable of making, and not more than a mile distant.

At the top of the ascent, they vaulted into their saddles and dashed down to the plain. The war-cries and howls of their enemies were plainly heard, and the horses, scenting the danger, flew with the winds. Over the hill swept the Indians with triumphant whoops, for they deemed their prey almost within their grasp. Under favorable condi-

tions, the two thoroughbreds could have easily distanced the Indian ponies, fleet as they were; but Harland's noble animal was beginning to show the effect of her double weight in labored breathing and forced spurts of speed.

On came their pursuers, wilder than ever, elated by the slight advantage gained. Reynolds and Bloody Knife turned, and, without checking the speed of their steeds, emptied two Indian saddles. The fire was instantly returned, and Bloody Knife's pony fell to the ground, while Reynolds's horse got a severe wound in the shoulder, but did not lessen his speed—the scout, placing his hand on his companion's saddle, easily kept alongside. From the first, they had kept in the rear of Harland and his terrified burden—who, in pitiful accents, begged him to kill her and save himself; but, with a tightened pressure of his arm, he told her he would live or die with her.

The object of the Sioux seemed to be to take them all alive, and, spreading out over the prairie, they were gradually flanking them on both sides. Almost in their course, the fugitives descried a rocky ridge rising above the level of the plain, with a few scattered bushes beyond. Thinking if they could but gain its shelter they might check for a time the advance of their foes, they strained every nerve to reach it. Their horses were reeking with foam, and bloody spume-flakes flew from their nostrils. They were within a few rods of this desired haven, the enemy close upon their heels, when a line of smoke and flame burst from this natural earthwork, and the report of a dozen carbines woke the echoes of the hills, emptying as many Indian saddles. Instantly a troop of cavalry poured out upon the plain, and, without stopping to form a line of battle, charged the flying Sioux with their war-cry of "Ouches! Ouches!" (Custer's Indian name.)

The tired ponies were no match for the fresh horses of the troopers, and their riders soon abandoned them and sought safety in the tall grass and sage-brush. The old dog took a lively interest in this fight, and, wherever the grass waved in snaky undulations, there he flew with tremendous leaps, his eyes glaring and foam dripping from his huge jaws; then a series of yells and fierce growls told the troopers where he had found

an enemy, and many times the carbine finished the work the dog's fangs had begun. The fight was soon over; many ponies were captured, with rifles, blankets, and all sorts of Indian trappings.

The soldiers who had made so timely an appearance on the scene were a part of a company that Custer had sent out for the double purpose of securing supplies for his command and looking after the absent scouts, about whom he felt the greatest anxiety. They had camped, the evening before, in the dry bed of a stream, and were in the act of preparing their breakfast when the rush of hoofs and the yells of the Indians burst upon their ears. Snatching their arms, they met them with the result already detailed.

What had appeared from a distance to be bushes proved to be the tops of trees having their roots in the bottom of the cañon, and

under their shade the fugitives found grateful rest, bringing splendid appetites to the ample breakfast of the soldiers.

By making short halts and long marches, they soon overtook the regiment. We will not dwell on Bretta's joyful reunion with her afflicted family, the general's delight at the safe return of the party, nor Blucher's triumphal entrance into the camp, his collar filled with eagle-feathers, and barking with all his might in response to the acclamations of the men. Custer received his old favorite with many caresses, and laughingly assured him that he should be breveted for his gallant conduct.

Two weeks later, and a merry party—consisting of Will Harland, his lovely bride, the Van Ness family, and several Eastern-bound officers—crossed the plains, and only separated in New York.

NOBLESSE OBLIGE.

BY MINNIE PALMER.

PORTICO wreathed by a clambering vine,
Where the rich trumpet-flowers gaudily shine—
Maid in soft muslins, flowers at her feet,
Weaves a fair chaplet to sell in the street.

Dark eyes of stranger the lovelight disclose—
Fortune disdaining, he begs for a rose;
A pure trusting heart soon awaits his command—
Love and white roses he wins with her hand.

Courts rich in splendor acknowledge her power;
Regal in diamonds, with beauty for dower,
The flower-girl triumphs o'er haughty and proud—
Royal and valiant before her have bowed.

Yet, pallid and drooping, why sighing alone?
Aweary of pleasure her spirit has grown;

Sweet matins of love, falling soft on the ear,
Of song-bird imprisoned, ring tuneless and drear.

Feet pause in the dancing, for longing to tread
Green meadows of childhood, with blossoms o'er-
spread;
Empty hands seeking lost jewels of gold—
A bunch of bright daisies caught fresh from the
mold.

When care like a mantle o'ershadowed the maid,
Sweet peace like a dove sought the portico's shade;
Where virtue so faithfully toiled in content,
A rainbow of hope o'er the low cottage bent.

And there would she fain in her lowliness tread—
Rude haunts of the hillside, with violets spread;
Her heart, with its longings she fears to disclose,
Lies cold in her breast like the dead summer's rose.

THE PITILESS WEAVER.

BY WILLIAM W. LONG.

WHEN miles lie piled between us,
Of earth and air and sea,
My face will ever turn backward
Where you sit waiting for me—
Sit waiting with tired hands
And memory's ghost of me,
Holding close to your lonely heart
Something that could not be.

O fate, so stern and heartless,
Weaving there in the gloom—
A mantle of sables to cover fair love
You are turning out from your loom!
Early and late, you tireless weave
A mantle yet incomplete;
But, the hour you bring it to me,
I'll make it my winding-sheet.